

## **A *Bildungsroman* for a waterfront development:**

### **Literary genre and the planning narratives of Jätkäsaari, Helsinki**

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#### **Abstract**

This article examines the narratives involved in the planning of Jätkäsaari (Helsinki), an industrial harbour environment currently being redeveloped. It starts out with an analysis of *Hyvä jätkä/Good Chap* (Hannu Mäkelä, 2009), a literary novel commissioned by the city to promote the area, arguing that this cultural product should not be seen merely as a piece of cultural branding. Rather, the novel's fictional construction of the area's past and future draws attention to the narrative characteristics of planning itself. Using the concepts of literary genre and metaphor, an examination of Jätkäsaari's planning narratives shows the ambivalent and often contradictory planning visions of the area. This study aims at re-examining the considerable research tradition in urban and planning studies that sees urban planning as a form of storytelling, by applying concepts from literary and narrative theory to the analysis of planning narratives.

**Keywords:** narrative planning, *Bildungsroman*, Helsinki, waterfront development, urban regeneration

#### **Introduction**

‘The aim was to make Jätkäsaari – a central section in the three-tier West Harbour development project – known in a new kind of way.’

(Laitinen 2015a)

‘Now Jätkäsaari has become well-known [...] the marketing side is important, because apartments have to get sold so that construction is continued, and also to ensure that it would not become a sleeper city, it has to get business activities, it has to get public transport going... and all this boils down to that it is well-known [...]. Nobody will invest in business in a place they don't know ... 'it would remain empty, such and area, windy and grey...’

(Laitinen 2015b)

With these words, Timo Laitinen, the former project manager of the West Harbour development in the Finnish capital, recounted the aims he had in mind when taking the unusual step of commissioning a literary novel to accompany the planning of Jätkäsaari, Helsinki. The novel in question, *Hyvä jätkä/Good Chap*, written by the locally renowned author Hannu Mäkelä, appeared in 2009 and is being distributed to all new inhabitants of the

area, a former container harbour that is currently being turned into a prestigious waterfront district. The use of literary fiction to accompany urban development raises several questions about the interplay between different kinds of narratives in the context of planning, as well as about their intended function. Should cultural products in planning be examined primarily in terms of marketing, as the quotes above suggest? Or would it be more astute to consider them as part and parcel of the broader narrative strategies involved in planning?

In this article, I take the commissioning of a work of literary fiction to promote an urban development project as a starting point to examine more broadly the narrative strategies and rhetorical devices used in the planning of Jätkäsaari. I argue that, by producing a dense intertextual interrelationship between fictional narratives, complex cartographic material, and planning narratives, the novel written by Hannu Mäkelä draws attention to the literary and narrative characteristics of planning itself. In doing so, it invites us to look with new eyes at other texts and practices coming from the city and its planning department. Rather than drawing primarily on cultural planning theory or city branding research, this study is informed by, and seeks to re-examine, the considerable research tradition that sees urban planning and development as a discursive practice, and as a form of storytelling (Throgmorton 1993, 1996; see also Ameen 2014a). More specifically, this article applies concepts from literary and narrative theory – genre and metaphor, in particular – to approach urban planning narratives. Bringing such concepts to bear could have the potential to enrich the conceptual toolbox available to researchers of contemporary planning practices in the wake of the argumentative and communicative turns (Fischer and Forester 1993; Innes 1995; see below). I first examine *Hyvä jätkä* as a work of literary fiction informed by the genre of the *Bildungsroman*. An analysis of the key narrative features of the planning documents and marketing strategies pertaining to Jätkäsaari – focusing, in particular, on character, plot, genre and metaphor – constitutes the second part of this article.

## **Jätkäsaari: background and sources**

While much of my examination will deal with narratives, it is important to emphasize the materiality of the subject matter. The redevelopment of the West Harbour area, immediately south-west of the Helsinki city centre, is part of one of the largest urban development projects in the Nordic countries. Following the relocation of industrial harbour activities from areas close to the centre of Helsinki to Vuosaari, in the east of the Finnish capital (2003–2008), a grand overhaul of the capital's waterfront has been underway; this overhaul has begun to take shape during the first decade of this century, and it is projected to be finalized in the 2030s. The developments at Jätkäsaari are part of this larger context.

Jätkäsaari, still the site of a large passenger harbour, is being transformed into a prestigious seaside working and living environment, planned to be completed by the late 2020s. In 2030, Jätkäsaari will be the home of 18,000 people, and will host 6,000 jobs. The material examined here consists of a selection of the narratives produced and commissioned by the Helsinki City and its Planning Department. These consist of the following: Hannu Mäkelä's novel *Hyvä jätkä* (2009), as well as planning documents by the Helsinki Planning Department, including the provisional report concerning the social effects of waterfront redevelopment (Hksv 2000), the local component master plan of Jätkäsaari (Hksv 2008a) and the local component master plan of Jätkäsaarenkallio and Hietasaari (Hksv 2009). In addition to these key narratives, I draw on a range of additional material to sustain my argument. These materials include texts and images related to the marketing campaign of Jätkäsaari (Both, 2013), the official Facebook profile of Jätkäsaari (Facebook/jätkäsaari, 2012), as well as interviews conducted with Hannu Mäkelä (interview conducted via e-mail, 12 February 2015) and with Timo Laitinen (interview conducted 4 March 2015).

## **Narrative, genre and planning**

Examining planning in terms of storytelling is rooted in a broader paradigm shift – beginning in the last quarter of the twentieth century – towards an understanding of planning and policy in terms of language, communication, and power struggles. Planning has increasingly become understood as a (politicized) form of communication, a way of negotiating between various stories of place (Fischer and Forester 1993; Hajer 1993; Ivory 2013; Mandelbaum 1991; Van Hulst 2012; Wood 2009: 207–10). One of the (often overlooked) consequences of a ‘narrative turn’ in planning is that, if planning is indeed increasingly approached as a form of storytelling, then it could and perhaps should be examined and evaluated on the basis of its narrative qualities, and by using narrative analysis.

Recent developments within narrative theory provide fertile ground for such a paradigm shift. Narratology, or the study of narrative, has increasingly developed into a field of study independent of the literary study of fictional texts, to include the analysis of a wide variety of documents, including non-textual narratives (Meister, Kindt, and Schernus 2005; Ryan 2005). Literary and narrative theory can play a much more prominent role in planning research than has hitherto been the case. Bringing in long-standing expertise on narrative structures, rhetorical devices, and imaginative worldmaking, literary scholars can provide meaningful analytical tools to urban planning theory. The case for a greater influence of city literature and its research on urban (planning) theory has recently been made on several occasions (Ganim 2002; Keunen and Verraest 2012), without, however, notable impact on the methodologies within urban planning theory. Following the usage within literary and narrative studies, ‘narrative’ will be approached here as the recounting of a specific story in a specific context, rather than as the more metaphorical and abstract use of the term as it sometimes appears in urban and cultural studies.

Narrative theory cannot be transposed wholesale from the realm of literary theory to the examination of highly stylized policy texts. A commentary to a component master plan is no *War and Peace*, and when concepts such as narrative ‘travel’ from one research field to another, the way in which they may be used and adapted is far from straight-forward (see Hyvärinen 2013). However, several elements of policy documents do constitute useful material for a narrative analysis.<sup>1</sup> The following narrative elements can be singled out as particularly meaningful. First, agents/actors, and the way in which they function as the central characters in narratives of the area and its change. Second, plot and genre, with particular attention to the kinds of causal change of events that are implied in the plot, and to how the plot is recounted in terms of a specific (literary/narrative) genre. Third, metaphor, and the kinds of rhetorical tropes used in describing the transformation of the planning area.

All three of these elements have implications for assessing the planning narratives in question. An analysis of planning narratives’ characters may reveal what actors or perspectives are excluded from the plans, and whose perspective is adopted (see Cohen 2008). The causality implied within a narrative plot may contain reasons for the specific choices made in the planning documents, and for the exclusion of others (Healey 1997: 277–78; Westin 2014: 213). Metaphorization may underscore the implied logical, ‘natural’ or necessary nature of a chosen course of action (Throgmorton 1996; Cresswell 1997).

Genre is considered here a key concept from literary studies that could shed light on how planning narratives of a particular area are shaped. Literary genre has been examined repeatedly (although rarely in depth) in studies of urban planning. These range from the treatment of (literary) utopia in planning rhetorics (see e.g. Hall 1989; Rykwert 2000; Pinder 2005), to arguments that modernist planning drew its inspiration from the pastoral (Berman 1983: 168), to specific case studies, such as Mareile Walter’s insightful analysis of Karlskrona’s planning narratives as modulation of the generic mode of the comedy (2013). In

an influential article on planning as storytelling, Leonie Sandercock emphasizes the importance of plot structures such as the rags-to-riches tale. Although she offers no detailed analyses of how planning uses generic features, she argues that ‘the moral ordering of the more familiar fictional genres is ... [also] present in stories in and about planning’ (2003: 12). Several thinkers applying narrative concepts to planning have been inspired by Hayden White’s (1973) examination of narrative tropes within historiography, which has also been applied in re-examining planning histories (Kramsch 1998). In what follows, I am interested, in particular, in how features of the genre of the *Bildungsroman* are involved in constructing a narrative identity for Jätkäsaari, Helsinki.

### ***Hyvä Jätkä: a Bildungsroman for a building project***

The commissioned novel *Hyvä jätkä*, which can be literally translated as ‘Good Chap’ or ‘Good Guy’ was published in 2009, a period when other marketing efforts of the area were under way. The most notable of these were the highly mediatized concert of Madonna in Jätkäsaari on 6 August 2009, one day before the local detailed plan for Jätkäsaari became effective (Hksv 2009; Laitinen 2015b), and the award-winning marketing campaign of the area (Both 2013). *Hyvä jätkä* tells the story of the area in the decades running up to the 1910s, when the area was transformed into an industrial harbour, by focusing on the coming of age of one fictional inhabitant of Jätkäsaari, Johannes Fri. Johannes, born in 1895, lives together with his mother on the island, and matures in the course of the novel into a young man who practices many of the various urban trades Helsinki has to offer, from construction worker to brewery hand, from a bakery boy to labourer at a shipyard. Experiencing a political awakening during the volatile first decades of the twentieth century, his life is moulded by the dichotomy between experiences of the sea and experiences of the city. The title of the novel

plays on the meaning of the name of the area where Johannes grows up: the Finnish name ‘Jätkäsaari’ literally means ‘chap’s’ (‘Jätkä’) ‘island’ (‘saari’) (see a.o. Ainiola 1997).<sup>ii</sup>

The novel’s subtitle, ‘a narrative’ suggests that this is a work of mere fiction, which relates to the planning of Jätkäsaari only tangentially in that it deals with the area’s history. The novel’s epilogue, written by Hannu Mäkelä, emphasizes that the author had a free hand in selecting and structuring his material, an argument that has been corroborated through interviews conducted with both the author and Timo Laitinen, who commissioned the book (Mäkelä 2009: 313; Mäkelä 2015; Laitinen 2015b). When taking into account the material surrounding the text, such as the blurbs (on the inside of the dust jacket and on the back of the book), the epilogue, the photographs and the fragments describing the history of the area added as appendix, as well as the map of the area in the book, a more complex picture appears of the book’s relation with the other narratives produced by the city and its planning department with regards to Jätkäsaari. Such materials surrounding the literary text proper have been called by the literary theorist Gérard Genette ‘paratexts’: ‘thresholds of interpretation’ crucial for how the reader approaches and interprets a work of fiction. Genette has argued that such material constitutes the ‘fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text’ (1997: 2).

The blurb on the inside of the dust jacket, written by Timo Laitinen, provides a first such framework for interpreting the events described in the novel. Laitinen writes that *Hyvä jätkä* was conceived as a condensed narrative of the cultural and personal narratives of the area, and in particular, of stories from the area before harbour activities began (in the late 1910s). He adds that the aim of the book was to give the future inhabitants and users of the area an insight into the history of Jätkäsaari and the people that used to live on the island. Most of the other paratexts, however, draw the readers’ attention not so much to how this book describes the early twentieth-century past, but to the fact that the events described in the

novel are intimately connected to the area's twenty-first century future. The historical descriptions added as appendices at the end of the novel, for example, look forward to the time when Jätkäsaari's transformation, to be finalized in the 2020s and 2030s, will have taken place and when the area will be connected to the Helsinki centre by tram n. 8 'once and for all' (2007: 312). It is a statement that frames the history of the island (as it appears in the literary text proper) in teleological terms; the struggle to integrate the area within the city centre will have reached its logical final stage once the current planning development is completed.

One of the most revealing paratextual elements is the map of the area (reproduced in the first and last spread of the book), which shows the location of the original, rocky islands of the area, whose contours were erased by the construction of the harbour in the 1910s. Overlaying these are not the outlines of the city of Helsinki at the time of writing (2009), but those as they will appear in the late 2020s, when construction of the area will have been completed (see Figure 1.). This palimpsestic map shows the complex temporal dimensions within which the fictional text operates: it describes events in the area leading up to the 1910s, but looking forward to events that lie in the future (from the point of view of the time of writing). The historical events described in the novel are not only to be seen as leading up to the present time, but are explicitly framed as events that should be interpreted in terms of future developments – and vice versa. The map, with its orientation towards a future dictated by the planning department, contextualizes this novel as a literary text that resembles urban planning documents. This contextualization is also carried out by another paratextual detail: the mention that *Hyvä jätkä* is published by the economics and planning department of the city of Helsinki – an institution more associated with policy documents than for publishing literary novels.

<<insert Fig. 1 here>>

Figure 1. Map of south-west Helsinki around 1900, with superimposed contours of the city around 2030.

In addition to the paratextual elements of the text, the genre of the novel, too, invites the reader to consider the events in the novel as commentaries on the planning narratives surrounding Jätkäsaari. The novel is constructed as a *Bildungsroman*, a ‘novel of development’, and the plot offers not only the description of a young man’s coming of age, but also that of a marginal urban area (Jätkäsaari) whose transformation is rendered in terms of a late-nineteenth-century urban utopia – all within a text that is aimed explicitly at early-twenty-first century readers who are moving into the same area, and who will be living on what is, in effect, a building construction site.

One of the dominant genres of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the *Bildungsroman* (see Bakhtin 1986; Boes 2006) is not without its political and socio-economic underpinnings. It is the “‘symbolic form’ of modernity”, as Moretti points out (1987: 5), and it has a special relation to narratives of society’s development, the rise of the middle class, and accelerating processes of modernization and industrialization. These processes tend to be couched in terms that underscore the linear and teleological (if often bumpy) road towards progress. More to the point of this study, the *Bildungsroman* is also bound up with a character’s integration into the urban environment: in its most conventional form ‘it depicts a young man abandoning provincial roots for an urban environment to explore his intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual capacities. Whether nurturing or inimical, this new environment proffers the possibility of attaining wisdom and maturity’ (McCarthy 2005: 41). *Hyvä jätkä* describes the emergence of what is at first described as a marginal character, and its integration into a modernizing, urban environment, in a twofold manner: first, in the way it renders the evolution of the protagonist, and second, in the way it describes the

transformation of the protagonist's spatial double: the island Jätkäsaari. Protagonist and area are described as living in a close relationship, and the character's development is presented as largely determined by his spatial surroundings. This close connection is made evident in the play of words in the title – the protagonist is the 'Good chap' ('Hyvä jätkä') of the title, but the 'chap' ('jätkä') in question can also be interpreted as an abbreviation of the island's name ('Jätkäsaari'; 'chap-island'), and the title suggests positive qualities both for the protagonist and for the island he inhabits. Like Johannes Fri, son of a Swedish-speaking father and Finnish-speaking mother, moreover, the island is presented as having a double linguistic identity. In the novel, it is referred to by its Finnish name, Jätkäsaari, its Swedish name Busholm, as well as by the Helsinki slang name Byysa (a Fennicized form of the Swedish name).

Framing parallel developments of a character and his surroundings as symptoms of society's change is thoroughly in line with the generic features of the *Bildungsroman* (in particular in its realist form), a genre that tends 'to emphasize the deterministic relationship between protagonist' and environment (Keunen 2001: 426–27; see also Bakhtin 1986). Thus, in *Hyvä jätkä*, the protagonist's slow incorporation into society, from a poor fisherman's son to self-learned construction worker and baker's hand (in turn constructing and feeding the city), is described in tune with the growing interdependence between the island and the rapidly developing Finnish capital. The modernizing processes culminate in the physical linking of the island with the mainland by means of an embankment Johannes participates in building, and the construction of the harbour, which will in turn speed on and feed the further growth of the capital.

The upward mobility of the protagonist is physically mirrored in the transformation of the built environment, but as so often in novels that describe the changes from cyclical to more linear experiences of the world, the way in which these transformations affect the

protagonist are far from unambiguously positive. Given that this is a novel commissioned to accompany an urban development project, it is striking that the relation between urban planning and the affected citizens is not without its strains. The development of the city and the expansion of the harbour enable the protagonist to become a full-grown member of the city community, but in the process he also loses his home. As the harbour expands, citizens in the island have to move out. Urban development is described as a violent process that devours its children: ‘When the war [the First World War] would be over, the harbour would most probably devour us slowly, and we would be out of the way, buried under streets and warehouses’ (Mäkelä 2009: 245). The image of a harbour able to ‘devour’ its own children implies a metaphorization of the modernizing city as a hungry and demanding monster, an image that resonates with the widespread literary trope of the city as a heathen Moloch, set loose by modernization. The description echoes a whole range of similar evocations of modernity in Finnish Helsinki novels written around the turn of the century, several of whom Mäkelä had consulted when doing background research for his novel (Ameel 2014b: 92–96; Mäkelä 2009: 314).

Marshall Berman points out that the literature of modernity is a relentless parade of ‘people who are in the way – in the way of history, of progress, of development; people who are classified, and disposed of, as obsolete’ (1983: 67); to Helsinki’s urban developers, Johannes Fri is not only disposable, but to all practical purposes also invisible. Representatives of the planning department visiting the island are described as exhibiting utter disregard for the original inhabitants: they trot around people’s backyard with measuring sticks to draw the future plans of the area, literally treating them as if they were not there (Mäkelä 2009: 206). ‘Fri’ is, as his (Swedish) surname suggests, a free man, but his powers, like that of the island he inhabits, have to be reared in and channelled through processes of education (*bildung*, development) in order to be made useful for society.

As the palempsestic map in the book exemplifies, the novel gains much of its meaning from the complex dynamics between the description of the area's transformation in the early twentieth century and the implied visions of planners at the time of the novel's writing. It acts, then, not as a reflection on the past, but as a mediation between the past and the future. A crucial figure who links turn-of-the-twentieth-century urban planning visions to those in the early twenty-first century is the secondary character 'Onkel' ('Uncle'), based on Julius Tallberg, a historical character (1857–1921) who, as successful businessman and active member of the city council, had a considerable influence on Helsinki's development around the turn of the twentieth century. Tallberg had envisioned the development of Jätkäsaari into a garden city-like urban villa society, a project that is explicated both in the novel itself, and in the historical appendices (Mäkelä 2009: 80–84, 305–306). Several of the visionary talks aimed by Onkel at young Johannes Fri can be interpreted as being aimed at least implicitly at present-day readers.

And then he [Onkel] painted me his picture in broad strokes and bright colours, so that I, too, could see how in Byysa [Jätkäsaari] a complete city would rise up, built of villas and houses, where the new homes of people were waiting for their inhabitants, where there would be paths and roads, a swimming pool and parks, schools and shops. And a church, too!

(Mäkelä 2009: 82)

This passage illustrates the complex functioning of a literary text that is set in the past, but communicates with the future. With the benefit of hindsight, the reader of *Hyvä jätkä* knows that the original plans of Tallberg to turn this area into an integral part of the city came to nothing during the first decades of the twentieth century. The promise of a utopian urban

environment remained unfulfilled. The island was integrated into the modernizing urban fold of the capital, but in the course of this process, Jätkäsaari was turned into an industrial harbour area and closed off from Helsinki's inhabitants. This past dream of a future development that was never realized is, at the time of writing the novel, presented as a vision that will be realized by the twenty-first century plans for Jätkäsaari's future. That is what the map in the text, with its superimposed cartographies of past and future, as well as other paratextual elements, argues. The utopian past-future visions presented in the novel will come true in the City Planning Department's plans. This orientation towards the future is acknowledged in the epilogue to the novel, which admits the commissioning of the books 'is about the future development of Jätkäsaari – a book, that should be written about Jätkäsaari' (Mäkelä 2009: 313).

The irony of the novel's double perspective is that, at least in a number of details, the future vision of Tallberg, which the narrator recounts with evident approval, has been shelved for a second time. During several phases in Jätkäsaari's recent planning, plans for a swimming pool and for a church island were on the table (Hksv 2004). Hannu Mäkelä was particularly charmed by the church plan (Mäkelä 2015). Plans are subject to change, however: the church will not materialize, and the fate of the swimming pool, too, remains uncertain.

### **Narratives in the planning of Jätkäsaari**

In the way it frames the history of Jätkäsaari, and in the way its paratexts guide the reading of the text, *Hyvä jätkä* invites intertextual readings of this novel and of contemporary urban planning documents pertaining to Jätkäsaari. The invitation to read such planning documents in terms of their narrative features is further strengthened by Finnish planners' own comments concerning the narrative characteristics of their activities (Koivu et al. 2013: 13),

as well as by recent developments in urban (planning) studies that point to an increasingly narrative understanding of planning. Similar to *Hyvä jätkä*, the planning documents of the area contain narrative features that resemble those typical of the *Bildungsroman*, projecting the development of Jätkäsaari as an integration of a marginalized character into the natural urban fold of the city centre. The way this integration is rendered metaphorical in the marketing of the area has relevance especially when considering alternative metaphors and storylines, and when comparing the gendered metaphor in a little-advertised early planning document with that in actual later marketing narratives. In what follows, I consider the implications of these various narratives for the material and immaterial infrastructure of the area.

In the planning documents of Jätkäsaari (Hksv 2000, 2008, 2009), the most prominent protagonists are the area itself (and in some instances the city of Helsinki), as well as the planners (or planning). Inhabitants or locals affected by the planning are largely absent as protagonists – a fact that may indicate the extent to which this planning development has been conceived of in terms of a rather traditional, modernist top-down project, rather than within a post-modern ‘collaborative’ or ‘communicative’ planning paradigm (Innes 1995; Healey 1997). The key story of Jätkäsaari’s development as narrated in planning documents is that of reintegration into the centre of the Finnish capital, and conversely of a regeneration of Helsinki’s centre. Urban development is argued to enable the formerly peripheral area to fulfil itself as integral part of the city centre (Hksv 2008a: 8, 13). In the local component master plan, Helsinki’s Strategic Spatial Plan, as well as in related documents, similar narratives evoking this strategic vision can be found: that of a peripheral area that becomes, or already is, an urban part of the city’s chore (Helsinki 2009: 18; Hk 2014: 15).

The interaction between Jätkäsaari and the city is envisioned in terms of a mutually beneficial relationship. The new development is argued to decidedly ‘increase the vitality of

the city centre and to improve the conditions for the development of the city' (Hksv 2000: 8). Development of Jätkäsaari (and other, similar formerly industrial areas) 'increases the number of inhabitants of the centre, sustains the population of the centre and the economic basis for the city and it will also enhance the regional balance between living and working areas' (Hksv 2000: 15). Development will not only sustain the existing urban balance, it is also argued to reverse a negative evolution. In the local component master plan of Jätkäsaari, the growth of Jätkäsaari is explicitly juxtaposed with the former decline in numbers of inhabitants in the Helsinki peninsula (Helsinki's southern district) during the four decades running up to the planning, and introduced as a counter-measure to this downward trend (Hksv 2008a: 60).

In this sense, the story of Jätkäsaari is couched in terms of a turning point, drawing thus on a wide-spread metaphor which features prominently in literary, media and film narratives (see Nünning and Sicks 2012). The metaphor is explicitly used by the Planning Department, which posits the development of Jätkäsaari and of Helsinki's industrial harbour front as a 'historical turning point' (Hksv 2000: 19) in the history of the Finnish capital. This 'turning point' is not understood only in terms of an upward surge in population figures, but also in the way the new plans present a radical new vision of the city and its planning. The development of the Helsinki waterfront is presented a clear break with the earlier, post-war urban development that had resulted in semi-self-sufficient concrete suburbs separated from the historical centre (Hksv 2000: 5–17). Instead, the relocation of the industrial harbour activities will enable an expansion of the city centre, in which the notion of 'urbanity' takes on a key role. Urbanity, which is understood as a combination of features of the centre's built environment, its social functions, and its mental associations, will be extended almost like an antidote to the trailing areas immediately adjacent to the inner city – areas that have remained underdeveloped but that, with the aid of planning, will be drawn into the beneficial

development carried in the inner city (Hksv 2000: 38–43). It is in effect the story of an ‘urban turn’, in tune with international talk of an urban renaissance popularized by Edward Glaeser and others (see Gleeson 2012). The turning point not only runs counter to an earlier existing philosophy of Helsinki’s urban development, it also literally moves in an opposite geographical direction: instead of moving inland and away from the centre towards the northern suburbs, as had been the case in earlier suburban development, it expands the urban core towards the southern shoreline of the Helsinki peninsula and its surroundings (Hksv 2000: 15–17).

The narrative of Jätkäsaari’s development in planning documents resembles in several respects the plot structure of the *Bildungsroman*, first of all in the manner it presents a story of mutually beneficial integration, under the aegis of a world in transition. In the *Bildungsroman* the relationship between a developing protagonist and a changing society is informed by a tension between what both are and what they could be. Summerfield and Downward point out that the *Bildungsroman* describes how a protagonist’s ‘emergence coincides with the world’s, and is at a transition point from one era to another. Becoming in transition creates tension, and frequently, a sense of contradiction, most evident in the protagonist’s vacillation between the ideal and the real, between potentiality and actuality’ (2010: 170–71). In the planning of Jätkäsaari, the integration of the marginalized protagonist (Jätkäsaari) and its environment (the surrounding areas in Helsinki) involves similar strains. In the projected outcome, however, these are resolved, resulting in a harmonious and mutually beneficial relationship.

It should be noted that planning narratives envisioning Jätkäsaari’s development describe a rather passive integration into the urban environment, in which several of the personal characteristics of the island are erased to enable the city to fulfil its potential. Agency does not belong to the peripheries, but rather, to the center that absorbs these. By

contrast, the novel *Hyvä jätkä* envisions a much more complex relationship between peripheral environment/character and the inner city. Throughout the novel, the protagonist struggles to keep his sense of agency, his ability to move independently, as well as the relationship to the sea that is one of his – and the island's – identity markers. In this sense, the almost religious experience the protagonist has when he learns to kayak on the sea, late in the *Hyvä jätkä*, acts as one of the counter-narratives to the powerful story of development-as-integration visible in the novel.

The *Bildungsroman*'s ideal, of course, had strong ideological undercurrents. It envisioned a wholesome individual in harmony with a wholesome society, a vision that was reflected in enlightenment planning visions of a harmonious spatial environment that could lead to a well-educated citizen able to maximize his/her contribution to society (see e.g. Rabreau 1997/2013; Zukin 1991: 492). Similarly, in the planning of Jätkäsaari and Helsinki's waterfront, a causal connection between the idea of good environment and a good human can be discerned. In an early planning document published by the Helsinki planning department examining the effects of developing the city's post-industrial waterfront, the project of expanding and invigorating a sense of 'urbanity' is argued to be not only beneficial for the city's development, it is also described as a project that makes for better citizens. The provisional report of the social effects of waterfront redevelopment explicitly argues that one of the main strengths of urbanity is that it facilitates 'citizens' development into good individuals, who alone and together are able and willing to develop human culture' (Hksv 2000: 1–2). This utopian vision of better citizens through a better city, reminiscent of turn-of-the-twentieth-century planning paradigms (see Wilson 1991: 69), is explicitly upgraded in terms of twenty-first century concerns of a globalizing, increasingly multicultural world: distinctly 'urban' environments are also understood to be better environments than concrete suburbs when it comes to integrating immigrants and foreigners (Hksv 2000: 67). The

*Bildungsroman* is not only supposed to describe education and development, in its ideal form it was a literary genre that was also meant to educate the reader. Bearing this in mind, one of the ways in which the lengthy explanatory sections of planning documents (Hksv 2000, in particular), can be approached is that these in effect constitute narratives aimed at educating the reader towards a more ‘urban’ attitude to the city. The same could be said of several of the promotional brochures and websites produced by the planning department in relation to Helsinki’s long shoreline during the past decades: they constitute endeavours to educate their readers towards new modes of urbanity, and towards a new appreciation of the inner city, in particular.

The link between a good urban environment and a good human is established in the marketing narrative of Jätkäsaari by way of a metaphor that is feeding also into the media coverage of the area, planning department leaflets, and official social media profiles of the development. The predominant metaphor used in framing the transformation of Jätkäsaari is the identification of the area with a male figure, an association based on the name of the area (‘Jätkä’ = ‘chap’). It is no coincidence that the metaphorization of the area resembles the close, almost symbiotic relationship between the ‘good chap’ Johannes Fri and the island Jätkäsaari in the novel *Hyvä jätkä*. The slogan for the marketing campaign, ‘Hyvä jätkä’ (‘Good chap’) was, in fact, inspired by Hannu Mäkelä, author of the book by the same name (Mäkelä 2015). When interviewed, Timo Laitinen, responsible for commissioning the novel, emphasized the importance of the book amongst the overall branding activities: ‘the book was an extra factor in all this [marketing], and provided a story. A story that could support these [other marketing efforts]’ (Laitinen 2015b).

In the marketing campaign that heralded the use of the ‘good chap’ metaphor, Jätkäsaari’s attractiveness was staged in distinctly gendered and masculine terms. Large, black-painted containers were distributed on the site of the planning area, featuring slogan in

which the island's name was abbreviated to the masculine 'jätkä' ('chap'), in which the area was (and is) described as having a masculine sex-appeal (see Figure 2). Narratives inspired by the marketing campaign's focus on the area's industrial past, a gendered can-do attitude, and a masculine attractiveness, have also appeared in social and traditional media. The official facebook profile of the planning area, for example, tended to abbreviate the name of the area into merely 'jätkä' ('guy'), and used slogans from the marketing campaign to frame news about the area (Facebook/jätkäsaari 2011).

<<Insert Figure 2 here>>

Figure 2. 'This chap's got (at)traction – on Madonna and me!' / 'Even mermaids are hooked on this chap!' (Source: Both 2013)

Metaphors provide a bridge between the present state and a future possibility, between 'is' and 'ought' (Fischer and Forester 1993: 11). In guiding associations and excluding others, metaphors linked to a specific geographic area can be instrumental in picturing seemingly logical or natural future courses of action (see Cresswell 1997). Although the metaphor of the city as body has a considerable history in urban studies, it is far from unproblematic (Sennett 1994; Gunder and Hillier 2009: 33). The metaphorization of Jätkäsaari in gendered or corporeal terms is far from 'natural', and could have been constructed on entirely different associative grounds. Intriguingly, body imagery was also used in one of the most mediatized alternative plans for Jätkäsaari, which proposed the development of the harbour in the form of a hand, with additional artificial channels to create what would have looked like fingers from a bird's view (Lehtovuori and Lehtovuori 2007).

Most conspicuously, in an early draft of the area's future identity, the proposed identity of the area was, in fact, that of the 'women's city' (Hksv 2000: 27–28). This concept,

which draws on the long-standing feminine metaphorization of Helsinki as the ‘Daughter of the Baltic’ (see Ameen 2014: 20–23), posited the area as ‘the gateway of the white daughter of the Baltic’ and ‘as such as a front window of Helsinki’s and Finnish culture’ (Hksv 2000: 27–28). The ‘Women’s city’ would have been meant to convey ‘the production of Nordic gender equality and Finnish female energy as a built environment’ (Hksv 2000: 27). The link between Jätkäsaari and the metaphorization of Helsinki as the ‘daughter of the Baltic’ was also made in the opening speech given on the occasion of the start of construction in Jätkäsaari. Helsinki’s major Jussi Pajunen claimed that, by opening up the waterfront, ‘the daughter of the Baltic is submitting herself to the sea, her former hunting grounds’ (Mattila 2008). The two contrasting metaphorizations of the area’s possible (gendered) identity also shed some light on the lack of deliberation that took place with regards to visions of the Helsinki waterfront and its development. There has been no public discussion of the ‘women’s city’ vision of Jätkäsaari as compared to that of a ‘good chap’ identity – like the later marketing campaign of the area, the vision was initiated from within the city, without consultation with the public (see for the top-down planning in Jätkäsaari also Othengrafen 2012).

To what extent do narratives matter for concrete developments on the ground? What could have changed if the planning department would have chosen to follow the metaphorization of the area in terms of a ‘woman city’? At the very least, one could argue that such a choice would have had its effect on the choice of street names – none of the streets in Jätkäsaari is named after a woman, although several are named after male composers.<sup>iii</sup> It is hard to gauge what the effect could have been in terms of built infrastructure, but in terms of investment in art, culture, social services, and other immaterial infrastructure, the comparison between Jätkäsaari and a similar post-industrial harbour area in the eastern part of the Helsinki peninsula, Kalasatama, is revealing. The same early document

that proposed the concept of the ‘woman city’ for Jätkäsaari advocated for the concept of ‘city of labour’ for Kalasatama (Hksv 2000: 25–27), with the aim to strengthen the links between this eastern harbour’s ties with the historical blue-collar districts immediately adjacent to it. Later planning documents have embraced this identification of Kalasatama with Helsinki’s gentrifying formerly blue-collar districts of Kallio and Sörnäinen, and with the area’s location within a ‘science-art industry axis’ towards the Arabia and Viikki areas (Hksv 2008b: 5–7, 19). Funding has been pouring in to support creative artist collectives that feed into this cultural identity, and the area has been given over to temporary use to foster its identity as a creative hub (Hernberg 2012). All of these development largely contrast with the current lack of such cultural amenities in Jätkäsaari.

The ‘male’ associations of Jätkäsaari in marketing and cultural narratives of the area seem to have had a subtle effect on the soft infrastructure of the area, which is only now taking shape. Since the inauguration of building construction (in 2008), activities and symbols associated with ‘boyish’ interests have been gravitating towards the area. Jätkäsaari’s prime attraction at the moment of writing is Verkkokauppa, a large electronics retailer shop. The building features a computer console museum (the only museum in the area) and an actual MIG fighter jet on the roof. In the spring of 2015, a large statue of a peeing boy, called ‘Bad Bad Boy’, found a temporary place in Jätkäsaari. The statue was originally created for an art festival in Örebro, Sweden, in 2013, from where it was transferred to Helsinki’s South Harbour for the Helsinki Festival in 2014. The statue, currently rented by Verkkokauppa, is being marketed as something of a symbol of Jätkäsaari as a whole.

<<insert Figure 3 here>>

Figure 3. Jätkäsaari is being marketed with the art installation ‘Bad bad Boy’. (Source: author’s archive)

Summarizing, it would be too easy to dismiss visions such as that of the ‘woman city’ or the marketing of Jätkäsaari’s development into an attractive ‘good chap’ as being merely important for marketing an area, but otherwise removed from urban realities or materialities. The planning document containing the vision of the ‘woman city’ repeatedly emphasizes that city planning is ultimately about re-enacting (cultural) ideas into material urban surroundings: ‘Society needs the materialization of ideas, ideologies and values. City living should be part of this materialization. The city should be thought of as the production of culture’ (Hksv 2000: 27–28). The emphasis in this policy document on the materialization of ideas in the built environment is a reminder of the material consequences narratives have in planning. The narrative of Jätkäsaari as an area that will be integrated in the fold of the city centre, where it ultimately belongs, has had substantial consequences for its built environment. The emphasis on the identity of the area as an environment that extends the urban fabric of the centre is visible in building height, in the distribution of space for commercial activities, in the focus on public transport (tram transport, in particular), and the building block structure (see e.g. Helsinki city 2009: 28). All these features can be seen as translations into the built environment of the dominant narrative of a logical and mutually beneficial inclusion into the fold of the city – the effect of narrative traits of genre of *Bildungsroman*, feeding into a grand twenty-first century narrative of an urban renaissance.

## **Conclusion**

Planning involves telling a story. In doing so, it negotiates between competing visions of the planned site’s past as well as of its proposed future. The commissioned literary novel *Hyyvä*

*jätkä*, while constituting a fairly unique endeavour to root a redeveloping environment within its broader literary and cultural-historical narratives, also discloses some of the narrative complexities involved in the planning of this area. Especially given the fact that it is distributed to all new inhabitants of the area, it can be considered as part and parcel of the Helsinki planning department's 'persuasive storytelling' activities (Throgmorton 1996). Features of the genre of *Bildungsroman*, with its roots in an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ideal of progress and the mutually beneficial integration of individual development into the good society, are not only confined to the novel *Hyvä jätkä*. They can also be discerned in the stories recounted within planning documents, which envision the integration of a peripheral area into the body of the city centre, and the concomitant recovery of the inner city. In bridging the gap between a planning area's present state and its envisioned future, metaphors provide a crucial conceptual link. But metaphorizations may also exclude contrasting views, and be decisive in guiding future courses of action. In the case of Jätkäsaari, the metaphorization of a city district as body encapsulates the identification between the interrelated development of city and human being, adding a specifically masculine layer of meaning. Ultimately, these narrative elements guide developments on the ground in relation to the built environment, to immaterial infrastructure such as temporary cultural amenities, as well as with regards to associations guiding future (and to a considerable extent still unforeseeable) decisions.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> In a number of planning theory texts dealing with narrative and storytelling, the concepts “narrative” and “story” are used interchangeably. Narrative and story are seen here as a central conceptual pair, relating to each other in a way not dissimilar as a word that is spoken and a word when it is thought of. Narrative entails the recounting of a story. A story, in turn, is considered here as the mental construct underlying the narrative, and defined here, following a well-established consensus amongst narrative scholars, as involving the following characteristics: 1. one or more human-like agents; 2. a world that goes through some kind of (not entirely predictable) change, and 3. mental states associated with the recounted event(s) (see Ryan 2005: 347).

<sup>ii</sup> The Finnish name of the island is most probably a mistranslation of an original Swedish name (“Busholm”; Ainiala 1997). The general public is most likely to identify the “chap” in the name with a blue-collar worker, and more specifically, with a harbour worker (due to the association between Swedish “hamnbuse” and “busholm”, that led to the mistranslation into Finnish). The “bus” from the original most likely refers not to a harbour worker (“hamnbuse”) but to a type of ship.

<sup>iii</sup> Only one toponym referring to a woman – a street named after the female composer Helvi Leiviskä – is currently planned for Jätkäsaari. There are also two streets named after the occupation “mess girl”, part of the maritime theme in the area’s toponyms. Otherwise, in terms of gender, toponyms refer to historical men and to male occupations.